

Message Text

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ACTION L-03

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NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 SY-10 USSS-00 EB-11

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 4173

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, UN, BE

SUBJECT: BELGIAN PROPOSAL ON TAKING OF HOSTAGES

REF: BRUSSELS 4090

1. SUMMARY: DISCUSSION WITH DAVIGNON REVEALED CONTINUED BELGIAN INTEREST IN INTRODUCING PROPOSAL ON TAKING OF HOSTAGES AT UNGA. BELGIAN PLAN MOTIVATED IN PART BY WISH TO PROVIDE FONMIN VAN ELSLANDE WITH A CREDITABLE INITIATIVE FOR PRESENTATION DURING HIS FIRST UNGA APPEARANCE. DRAFT PROPOSAL WILL BE GIVEN TO EMBASSY ON JULY 25 FOR US REVIEW AND BELGIANS WILL CONSIDER US REACTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS BEFORE PROCEEDING ANY FURTHER. THEY HOPE THAT US CONCERNS WILL BE ALLAYED WHEN MORE DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF BELGIAN PROPOSAL HAS BEEN EXAMINED. END SUMMARY.

2. IN MEETING JULY 21, DAVIGNON DISCUSSED WITH CHARGE POSSIBLE BELGIAN UN INITIATIVE ON TAKING OF HOSTAGES, FOLLOWING HIS INTERNAL REVIEW OF THIS SUBJECT WITHIN FOREIGN MINISTRY. CHARGE

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OUTLINED U.S. CONCERNS, WITH WHICH DAVIGNON SEEMED FULLY FAMILIAR FROM REPORTS OF HIS STAFF AND HIS EARLIER CONVERSATIONS WITH AMBASSADOR STRAUZ-HUPE. DAVIGNON ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD SOME OF SAME PREOCCUPATIONS AS U.S. REGARDING POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF A BELGIAN INITIATIVE ON CHANCES FOR SUCCESS OF CONVENTION ON PROTECTION OF DIPLOMATS. HIS TENTATIVE CONCLUSION, HOWEVER, WAS THAT THESE FEARS ARE EXAGGERATED AND WOULD BE ALLAYED ONCE BELGIAN INITIATIVE IS SPELLED OUT MORE CLEARLY AND ITS LIMITED SCOPE AND FRAMEWORK BECOME KNOWN. HE MENTIONED IN PARTICULAR THAT A BELGIAN INITIATIVE WOULD BE DESIGNED FOR CONSIDERATION BY US BODY OTHER THAN COMMITTEES THAT MIGHT BE CONSIDERING TERRORISM OR PROTECTION OF DIPLOMATS.

3. DAVIGNON HAS, THEREFORE, ASKED HIS STAFF TO "TRY TO DRAFT" A MEMORANDUM DESCRIBING BELGIAN PROPOSAL IN A FORM THAT COULD SERVE AS EXPLANATION FOR UNGA. BEFORE PROCEEDING FURTHER HE WOULD TRANSMIT MEMO TO EMBASSY TO SEE IF US CONCERNS HAVE BEEN OVERCOME BY MORE SPECIFIC VERSION OF BELGIAN PROPOSAL. IN ANY EVENT THE MINISTRY WOULD BE PLEASED TO HAVE US REACTIONS, INCLUDING THAT OF AMBASSADOR SCHAUFELLE, AND WOULD CONSIDER THEM CAREFULLY.

4. CHARGE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THIS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF BELGIAN WILLINGNESS TO CONSULT WITH US AND TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF US VIEWS. HE QUESTIONED WHETHER US RESERVATIONS WOULD BE OVERCOME, HOWEVER, GIVEN THE DELICATE TACTICAL SITUATION IN THE UN, AND INQUIRED WHETHER BELGIAN UN DELEGATION WAS SATISFIED THAT BELGIAN PROPOSAL WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH PROSPECTS FOR CONVENTION ON PROTECTION OF DIPLOMATS. HE ALSO INQUIRED WHETHER SUFFICIENT TIME WOULD BE ALLOWED FOR WASHINGTON AND USUN TO REVIEW THE BELGIAN DRAFT AND TO MAKE KNOWN US VIEWS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT DAVIGNON'S OWN PLANS TO BEGIN HIS VACATION ON JULY 30. DAVIGNON REPLIED THAT WHILE BELGIAN UNDEL HAD RESERVATIONS SIMILAR TO THOSE OF US, THEY WERE NOT YET FAMILIAR WITH SPECIFICS OF BELGIAN PROPOSAL. HE THOUGHT THAT THEY TOO WOULD BE REASSURED WHEN THEY KNEW MORE ABOUT WHAT WAS INTENDED. AS FOR TIMING, HE HOPED TO TRANSMIT THEIR DRAFT PROPOSAL TO US ON JULY 25. (CHARGE HAS TENTATIVE APPOINTMENT TO MEET WITH HIM ON OTHER MATTERS THAT DAY.) AMPLE TIME COULD

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BE PROVIDED FOR US TO REVIEW PROPOSAL, ACCORDING TO DAVIGNON, SINCE MINISTRY WOULD BE ABLE TO CONSIDER US VIEWS AND ARRIVE AT A DECISION EVEN IF HE IS ABSENT. (WE UNDERSTAND THAT DAVIGNON WILL BE IN BRUSSELS IN EARLY AUGUST AND THEREFORE COULD WELL LEAD FURTHER FOREIGN MINISTRY DELIBERATIONS WHEN THOUGH OFFICIALLY ON VACATION.)

5. DAVIGNON MENTIONED THAT BELGIAN PROPOSAL

WAS CONCEIVED AS NEW INITIATIVE WHICH BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE COULD PUT FORWARD IN COURSE OF HIS FIRST APPEARANCE AS BELGIAN REP AT UNGA. TIME DID NOT SEEM PROPITIOUS FOR INITIATIVES IN OTHER AREAS, MANY OF WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN SUBJECT OF SPEECHES BY HARMEL, VAN ELSLANDE'S LONG-TIME PREDECESSOR AS FOREIGN MINISTER. INTERNATIONAL RAMIFICATIONS OF TAKING OF HOSTAGES SEEMED TO BE IMPORTANT GAP IN INTERNATIONAL LAW AND ONE THAT DESERVED CONSIDERATION WHETHER OR NOT "TERRORISM" WAS INVOLVED IN SUCH AN ACT.

6. PER SCHAUFLE/BERLIND TELECON JULY 20, EMBASSY WILL ADVISE SCHAUFLE ASAP OF AVAILABILITY OF DAVIGNON OR OTHERS FOR CONSULTATION ON AUGUST 1.

7. COMMENT: JUDGING FROM DAVIGNON'S REMARKS, IT IS CLEAR THAT HE REMAINS MUCH ATTRACTED TO IDEA OF AN INITIATIVE ON HOSTAGES AND IS HOPING THAT IT CAN BE PACKAGED AND PRESENTED IN WAY TO REDUCE CONCERNS OVER INTERFERENCE WITH CONVENTION ON PROTECTION OF DIPLOMATS. WHILE WE HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT THAT MINISTRY WILL CONSIDER CAREFULLY US COMMENTS OR CRITICISM, AND MAY BE QUITE READY TO ACCEPT MODIFICATION OR ADAPTATIONS OF THE FORTHCOMING PROPOSAL, DAVIGNON WILL NEVERTHELESS BE HARD TO DISSUADE FROM PROCEEDING WITH SOME VERSION OF IT. IN ADDITION TO US REACTION, THAT OF BELGIAN UN DELEGATION IS LIKELY TO PROVE PARTICULARLY INFLUENTIAL. BOOCHEVER

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